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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allāh. We seek His assistance and His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allāh from the evil of ourselves and the evil of our actions. Whomsoever Allāh guides none can misguide him, and whomsoever Allāh misguides none can guide him.

I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh alone, without partner. I bear witness that Muḥammad is His slave and Messenger. May the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him.

This sermon is known as the *khutbah al-hājjah*. It is delivered before a person wishes to discuss a need of his, whether that need is marriage, a worldly need or a religious need. This is why it is called *khutbah al-hājjah* (the sermon of need). We shall now explain some parts of this sermon.

Whomsoever Allāh guides none can misguide him. This statement clearly shows that whomsoever Allāh has decreed guidance for none has the ability to misguide him or remove him from the guidance which he has been blessed with.

...and whomsoever He misguides none can guide him. Similarly, whomsoever Allāh has decreed misguidance for none has the ability to guide him.

I bear witness. The reason this testification is in the singular tense as opposed to the plural 'we' found at the beginning of the sermon, is due to the singular tense being more appropriate when discussing the unity and oneness of Allāh, the Most High.

I have been asked by a number of brothers to author an introduction to the exegesis of the Qur'ān, comprising of comprehensive principles which will assist one in understanding its meanings as well as differentiating between the truth and all kinds of falsehood indicating in all of the above the criterion to be used in this.

Here, the author¹ mentions the reason which led him to author this book; that reason being he was requested to do so. An author either pens a book due to him realising that there is a need for such a topic to be discussed, or there may be another reason, such as him being asked to do so. Therefore, in the first instance, he is addressing a need, and in the second he is responding to a request. Indeed, if a scholar realises that people are in need of knowledge in a particular field, then he must address this need and author works in this field. This is so that people are fully aware of the rulings and are able to worship Allāh upon clear guidance and understanding.

The author says 'comprehensive principles'. *Qawā'id* is the plural of *qā'idah* [principle] and it means the foundation of something. This is where the saying '*qawā'id al-bayt*' ['the foundations of a house'] is derived from. Therefore, these are the principles and foundations which assist one in understanding the Qur'ān and the principles of the exegesis of the Qur'ān. This is because understanding the Qur'ān is one of the three reasons for which it was revealed.

The Qur'ān was revealed for three reasons: to worship Allāh by reciting it, to understand its meanings and to act according to it. This is why the companions (رضي الله عنهم) would not pass ten verses until they had completely understood and acted upon them. They would say: 'So we learnt the Qur'ān, knowledge and action all together.'

¹ i.e. Shaykh ul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah.

Whoever calls to it has been guided to the straight path. This means that Allāh has guided such an individual, for one who calls to the Qur'ān has been guided to the straight path. As for one who calls to his own desires then he will be misguided. This is why the author also states: And whosoever seeks guidance elsewhere will be misguided.

And whosoever arrogantly leaves it will be destroyed. This peril and destruction does not necessarily have to take place in this world, but it can also be in the Hereafter.

Allāh says:

فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى
فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى ۚ وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنِّي
ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ
أَعْمَى ۚ قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا ۚ
قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَنتَ كَذِلٌّ ۖ أَيْنَمَا فَتَنَسِينَهَا ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْشَىٰ

And if there should come to you guidance from Me – then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter]. And whoever turns away from My remembrance – indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e. difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e. raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind. He will say, “My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?” [Allāh] will say, “Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e. disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.”

Sūrah Tā-Hā, 20:123-126

...will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter]. This verse means that he will not go astray regarding his knowledge, nor will he suffer in his actions. Another explanation is he will not go astray in this world, nor will he suffer in the Hereafter, and each interpretation alludes to the other. However, misguidance is normally referred to as being the opposite of knowledge and guidance, and suffering is the opposite of happiness.

And whoever turns away from My remembrance – indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e. difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e. raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind. It is said that a ‘depressed life’ refers to the punishment of the grave; the grave will continue to constrict until one’s body is twisted. Others state that this ‘depressed life’ will be in this world, and even though he may apparently show signs of happiness, his heart will be in a state of depression and constriction. Allāh says:

CHAPTER 3

Differences of Opinion amongst the Predecessors in the Exegesis of the Qur'ān: A Difference of Variation

The predecessors differed little in the exegesis of the Qur'ān, however they differed considerably more in issues related to rulings (*ahkām*). Whenever they do differ in the exegesis of the Qur'ān it is more a difference of variation than contradiction. This is of two categories:

Here the author asserts that differences amongst the predecessors in the exegesis of the Qur'ān may occur, but it is significantly less than their differences in rulings. The reason for this is that exegesis revolves around explaining words, their meanings and what is intended by them, and this is something in which there is not much difference. In contrast to this, rulings are based upon deduction and analogy, so differences are considerably more so than in *tafsīr*, due to a contrast in the levels of knowledge and understanding.

We have previously mentioned the difference between the explanation of the words of the Qur'ān and their meanings, and the fact that they are not necessarily one and the same. Explanation of the words is done by using other words to clarify the meaning of that particular word, whereas explanation of

The author (may Allāh have mercy upon him) states here the reasons which may cause a difference of opinion; however these causes are not meant to be comprehensive, as this can be found in another of the author's works: *Raf' al-Malām 'an al-A'imat al-A'lām* (Removing the Blame from the Great Scholars).

Here he states, 'due to relevant evidences being hidden', i.e. the scholar doesn't believe it is an evidence for that particular issue, so even though he came across the evidence, it didn't seem relevant to the issue at hand. Likewise, the evidence may be 'overlooked', meaning that even though he knew of the evidence he forgot it. If it is due to not being heard then that scholar was unaware of the evidence, or the difference may be due to misunderstanding the texts. The final cause mentioned here is due to the scholar knowing of the evidence, but due to another reason he avoids implementing it, such as the text being general and the scholar finding something which specifies it, or the text being limited in its application.

Whoever wishes to expound upon this topic should return to the author's work in this subject: *Raf' al-Malām 'an al-A'imat al-A'lām* and also our book which is a summary of the authors with clearer examples: *Differences of opinion amongst the scholars – Their causes and our position towards them*.³⁵

³⁵ Available in English, published by al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution.

CHAPTER 4

The Two Categories of Differences in the Exegesis of the Qur'ān Relating to the Source: Narrations and Deductions

Differences in the exegesis can be of two types: The source of the first is narrations and the other type is derived from different means, for knowledge is either a truthful narration, or a correct deduction, and the narrations either originate from one who is infallible or one who is not.

Here, we will discuss these narrations irrespective of whether they stem from an infallible authority or not; this is the first category. At times, we are able to distinguish between authentic and weak narrations and at times we are unable to do so. This latter part whose authenticity we cannot ascertain, for the most is unbeneficial and to delve into it is unnecessary.

As for that knowledge which is essential to the Muslims, then Allāh has placed for them sufficient signs showing them the truth. An example of that which is unbeneficial and has no clear evidence is the difference regarding the colour of the dog belonging to the companions of the cave. Similar to this is the difference regarding which part of the cow was used to strike the slain man.

Also included in this are the measurements of the ark of Nūh, and the type of wood used.

This is correct. Differing over the colour of the dog of the companions of the cave possesses no benefit, whether it was red, white or black it is unbeneficial to us and we have no way of correctly ascertaining this, unless we use Israelite traditions (*Isrā'iliyyīn*), and these traditions are not trustworthy. Therefore, there is no benefit in this and its colour makes no difference.

Similarly, another example is the part of the cow used by Mūsā to strike the slain man in the verse:

فَقُلْنَا أَضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا

So We said, "Strike him [i.e. the slain man] with part of it."

Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:73

Is the part being referred to the arm, leg, neck or head? There is no way to ascertain this.

[Concerning the ark of Nūḥ] there is no benefit in knowing where the wood came from or what type it was, did it come from the tamarisk or was it teal? What was its height, length and width? All of this is unbeneficial.

Similar to this is the name of the boy killed by Khidr etc. All this can only be ascertained from narrations. That which is authentically narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ) in this regard, such as the name of the companion of Mūsā being Khidr³⁶ is accepted. As for other than this, such as that which is taken from the People of the Book, like the narrations of Ka'b, Wahb, Muḥammad ibn Ishāq³⁷ and others who take from them, one cannot accept or reject these narrations except with clear proof.

It is reported in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "If the People of the Book narrate to you then do not attest to their truthfulness nor reject them, rather say we believe in Allāh and His Messengers. Otherwise you may reject something truthful or attest to something false."³⁸

Likewise, if narrations of the *tābi'ūn* - irrespective of whether or not they are taken from the People of the Book - differ then some of their sayings do not hold greater weight and authority than others. Rather, authentic narrations from the companions in this regard are more reliable than narrations from their students, as it is a stronger possibility that the companion heard his opinion from the Prophet (ﷺ) or from another of the companions who in turn heard it from the Prophet (ﷺ). Furthermore, the companions' narrations from the People of the Book are less than that of the *tābi'ūn*.

³⁶ See *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 74 and *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2380.

³⁷ Ka'b al-Aḥbār, lived at the time of the companions. He narrated prophetic *ḥadīth* from the companions, and they narrated from him stories of the Prophets. He died in Hams in the year 32AH during the Caliphate of 'Uthmān.

Wahb ibn Munabbih was born towards the end of the Caliphate of 'Uthmān. He narrated from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Ibn 'Umar, and in turn was narrated by 'Amr ibn Dīnār and his contemporaries. He became judge of San'ā and was known for quoting Israelite traditions. He authored a book on the topic of qadr and later retracted it. Other than this he was considered to be trustworthy in his narrations, and his narrations from his brother Hamām are collected in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*. He died in the year 114AH.

Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, a scholar specialising in history and battles. Ibn Ma'in said: Trustworthy but not sufficient on his own. Ahmad said: His *ḥadīth* are sound. He died in the year 151AH.

³⁸ See *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 4485.

CHAPTER 5

The Second Category: Differences in *Tafsīr* Relating to Reasoning and Deductions

The second of the two categories in which differences occur relates to reasoning and deduction as opposed to narrations. Most mistakes which occur in *tafsīr* are as a result of two things which appeared after the generation of the companions, their students (*tābi'ūn*) and those who followed them in righteousness. For this reason, you will not find any of these two things in the exegesis and commentaries of those noble scholars, the likes of 'Abdul-Razzāq,⁸⁸ Wakī',⁸⁹ 'Abd ibn Humayd,⁹⁰ 'Abdul-Raḥmān ibn Ibrāhīm Duḥaym, Imām Aḥmad, Ishāq ibn Rāḥawayh,⁹¹ Baqī

⁸⁸ He was 'Abdul-Razzāq ibn Hamām ibn Nāfi' al-Ḥumayrī al-Ṣan'ānī, one of the great scholars and memorizers. He studied under Ibn Jurayj, Hishām ibn Ḥassān, Thawr ibn Yazīd, Ma'mar and Mālik. His students included many noteworthy scholars who would travel to study with him. He was born in the year 126 AH and died in the year 211 AH.

⁸⁹ Wakī' ibn al-Jarrāḥ ibn Mulayḥ al-Kūfī, a great scholar and student of Hishām ibn 'Urwah, Ibn 'Awn and Shu'bah. He was from the teachers of Imām Aḥmad who said concerning him: 'I have not seen his likes in knowledge, memorization and accuracy; on top of that he possessed piety and god-fearingness.' He died in the year 196 AH.

⁹⁰ 'Abd ibn Humayd ibn Naṣr al-Kassī, from the teachers of Muslim and al-Tirmidhī. Ibn Hajar said in *Taqrīb*: 'A trustworthy memorizer.' He passed away in the year 249 AH.

⁹¹ Abū Muḥammad Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Rāḥawayh, died 238 AH. He was the most outstanding scholar of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* in Khurasān during his time.

ibn Mukhlid,⁹² Abū Bakr ibn al-Mundhir, Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah,⁹³ Sunayd, Ibn Jarīr,⁹⁴ Ibn Abī Ḥātim,⁹⁵ Abū Sa‘īd al-Ashajj, Abū ‘Abdullāh ibn Mājah⁹⁶ and Ibn Mardawayh.

The first problem which arose was people believing in certain ideologies and then interpreting the Qur’ān to fit those ideologies. The second problem was a group of people who interpreted the Qur’ān just as an average Arabic speaker would, without considering from whom these words came, to whom it was revealed and who they were addressing.

Therefore, the first group of people held certain beliefs and ideologies, and then wanted to use the words of the Qur’ān to support their ideologies. This was in both issues of belief as well as in practical rulings. As such, you will find a person who holds a certain belief, trying to change the meanings of the divine texts in order to support his views, whether this is regarding the names and attributes of Allāh, matters of *tawḥīd* or other similar matters.

For example a person will say, ‘In my opinion, it is allowed for one to seek closeness to Allāh (*tawassul*) even via the *jinn* and devils. The proof for this is the verse: “O you who believe! Fear Allāh and seek the means [of nearness] to Him”⁹⁷ so I may seek

⁹² Abū ‘Abdul-Raḥmān Baqī, a Spanish scholar who died in 276 AH. He was born in Cordoba and travelled to Makkah, Madinah, Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

⁹³ Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah ibn Maymūn, died 198 AH. He was born in Kūfah but later settled in Makkah. He was a well-known transmitter of *ḥadīth*.

⁹⁴ Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, died 310 AH. He was a great historian, an eminent jurist and an outstanding commentator of the Qur’ān. He was born in Tabristan and later settled in Baghdad where he died.

⁹⁵ ‘Abdul-Raḥmān ibn Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, died 327 AH. He was a scholar and critic of *ḥadīth* who penned many works.

⁹⁶ Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah, died 273 AH. He is the compiler of the sixth most authentic collection of *ḥadīth*.

⁹⁷ Sūrah al-Mā‘idah, 5:35.

nearness to Him by any means necessary.’ Similarly, he may deny the attributes of Allāh using as evidence the verse: “*There is nothing like unto Him*”⁹⁸ claiming that by affirming an attribute he has inadvertently likened Allāh to His creation. By holding such views that individual then interprets the Qur’ān to support those views.

The second group of people did not possess any preconceived views, rather they interpreted the Qur’ān literally, without considering from whom these words originated; Allāh, or to whom they were revealed; the Prophet (ﷺ), or who they were addressing; the ones to whom the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent. They only saw the Qur’ān in a very literal way; this is also incorrect. Everyone agrees that speech can vary in meaning depending upon who is speaking and to whom his words are being addressed.

An example of this is that if a nobleman was to identify a fault in you, and the same fault was also identified by a person of very low social standing, the criticism of the former would have a greater impact than the criticism of the latter. Even though both identified the same fault, the words of a nobleman hold greater weight. Another example of this is if you were to say to someone: ‘I swear you are a small man.’ This statement would be deemed as praise if the one being addressed is a boy. At the same time, the statement would be dispraise to a fully grown and intellectual man. Therefore, words hold different connotations depending on who one is addressing. Certain people only interpret the meanings of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* literally without taking into account the speaker, audience and other similar factors.

⁹⁸ Sūrah al-Shūrā, 42:11.

CHAPTER 8

Exegesis of the Qur'ān Based on Intellect and Reason

Exegesis of the Qur'ān based solely on one's reasoning is *ḥarām*. Mu'ammal informed us from the authority of Sufyān from 'Abdul-A'ālā, who related from Sa'īd ibn Jubayr that Ibn 'Abbās said: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Whoever speaks about the Qur'ān without knowledge then let him take his seat in the Fire.*"¹³⁹

Wakī' informed us on the authority of Sufyān from 'Abdul-A'ālā al-Tha'labī, who related from Sa'īd ibn Jubayr that Ibn 'Abbās said: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Whoever speaks about the Qur'ān without knowledge then let him take his seat in the Fire.*" Al-Tirmidhī reports from 'Abd ibn Ḥumayd from Ḥibbān ibn Hilāl, who was informed by Suhayl the brother of Ḥazm al-Qat'ī, who related from Abū 'Imrān al-Jūnī from Jundub that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Whosoever speaks about the Qur'ān using his own intellect and happens to be correct [in his reasoning] is still wrong.*"¹⁴⁰ Al-Tirmidhī declared this *ḥadīth* to be unfamiliar (*gharīb*) and some scholars of *ḥadīth* have spoken concerning Suhayl ibn Abū Ḥazm. These are the reports from the scholars who narrated from the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and other than them, all stating the severity of commentating on the Qur'ān without knowledge.

¹³⁹ *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 2950.

¹⁴⁰ *Sunan Abu Dawūd*, no. 3652 and *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 2952.

There are some reports that Mujāhid, Qatādah and other than them would commentate on the Qur'ān, however, one does not believe that their commentaries were not based on knowledge or that they spoke of their own desires. There are many narrations from them which support the fact that they did not use their own reasoning in the exegesis of the Qur'ān. Whoever speaks about the Qur'ān using his own reasoning has placed a burden upon himself which he need not bear, and he is treading a path he has not been ordered to tread. Even if he were to stumble upon the correct meaning he would still have erred. The reason for his error is because he did not approach this matter through the correct channel. This is similar to the one who judges between people with ignorance thus ending up in the Fire even if his ruling is correct at times. He is still sinful but his sin is less than the one who is incorrect in his ruling, and Allāh knows best.

The one who strives to reach the truth but then errs still receives a reward; similarly the one who does not strive but then is correct has still erred, especially if what he is discussing contains no room for analogy and reasoning.

When a person commentates on the Qur'ān based on his own reasoning, he may interpret the Qur'ān according to his own views and beliefs, just as the people of desires do. They state that such and such means such and such, referring to what they believe in. Likewise, in later times, those who interpret the Qur'ān with modern and scientific discoveries – even though the Qur'ān does not allude to their interpretations, neither explicitly nor linguistically, have also interpreted the Qur'ān using their own intellect and reasoning; this is impermissible.

Similarly if one does not possess understanding of the linguistic or *shar'ī* meaning of a verse, but still speaks about it, he has also spoken without knowledge, and so is sinful. The example of this is a layman who interprets a verse of the Qur'ān according to his own understanding without any basis, neither linguistic nor *shar'ī*. Such a person has committed an unlawful act. The reason

for this is that such a person testifies that this interpretation is what Allāh intended to say, and this is a dangerous matter. Allāh has forbidden that one should speak about Him without knowledge,

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ
بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا
عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا نَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities – what is apparent of them and what is concealed – and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allāh that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allāh that which you do not know."

Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7:33

Whoever speaks about Allāh without knowledge concerning the meaning of His speech or any of His rulings has committed a grave sin.